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China Landscapes

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China Landscapes *by Glen Phillips*

China Landscape 1 *Summer*

Whining accordion in a slow
South China afternoon;
the cicadas seethe and fry
in the fat of jungle trees.

China Landscape 2 *Winter*

Weak sun by the river wall
blotched the pavement beneath
unleafed willows. The benches
hosted other figures also slumped
against the chill wind from Shandong.

I had come here to contemplate,
to know the way, to gather
energy for renewal. Ships
and barges close by on the Huang Pu
clanked at work or hooted warnings.

Graffiti on the wall's rough stone
warned us to review the path ahead
and one songless bird fluttered
futilely, escaping twigs and branches.
Suddenly a child flew a bright kite.

China Landscape 3 *Spring*

Snow had long lifted from the grassland
and meadow flowers began their spring
offensive. You took your son's hand
and walked some way along dirt roads.
He said, 'Mother, the geese have returned
from wintering south. Soon father and
I will go hunting. You'll see what I've learned.'

China Landscape 4
Autumn

In Hebei's mountains bare persimmon trees
are laden with setting suns, amber
in the mist. And the memory
of you is heaped autumnally
like these warm fruits ready for sale.

Set before farmhouse after farmhouse
not only are persimmons but apples,
incandescent mounds of plums
or saffron apricots, fallow pears.

Meanwhile firewood enough to roar
high in clay-fired chimneys is stacked
hectic as preparations for feasting
a bride and groom in these autumn days
that will bring me hopefully to you.

Note: 'China Landscapes' was 'Highly Commended' for the 2009 Tom Collins Poetry Prize

Born in Western Australia in 1936, in the remote gold-mining town of Southern Cross, Glen Phillips was brought up mainly in outback wheatbelt areas where he developed not only a strong identification with the Australian landscape but an early love of Australian literature. His poetry has been featured on national radio and television. Glen's short stories also have been published in Australia and overseas. Glen is an adjunct Associate Professor of English at Edith Cowan University, Perth and Director of the University's International Centre for Landscape and Language.